COVID-19 Education Response Webinar 5

Distance Learning Strategies

What do we know about effectiveness?

When: Friday 17 April 2020 - 13h00-14h30 GMT+2 (Paris time)
Weblink: http://www.unesco.org/covid19EDwebinar

Introduction

Education systems around the world are facing an unprecedented challenge in the wake of massive school closures mandated as part of public health efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19. Governmental agencies are working with international organizations, private sector partners and civil society to deliver education remotely through a mix of technologies in order to ensure continuity of curriculum-based study and learning for all. However, very little is known, at present, about how these strategies are ensuring effective and equitable access to quality learning opportunities for all. Indeed, the effectiveness of strategies is conditioned by levels of preparedness from various perspectives:

1. **Technological preparedness**: This includes limitations in both the technical capacities of national platforms or TV and radio broadcasting systems to provide learning remotely for all learners, as well as limitations in household access to electricity, TV, radio, digital devices, and internet connectivity.

2. **Content preparedness**: This includes accessibility to teaching and learning materials aligned with national curricula that can be delivered through online platforms, TV or radio programmes, or used for print-based home learning.

3. **Pedagogical preparedness**: This includes (1) Preparedness of teachers to design and facilitate online learning, TV or radio based distance learning, or print materials based home learning; and (2) Availability and ability of parents or caregivers to facilitate effective home-based distance learning.

4. **Monitoring and evaluation preparedness**: This includes capacities to monitor access to distance learning, to track learning process and interruptions, and to evaluate learning achievements. This also includes mitigation strategies such as measures put in place to provide support to learners, teachers, parents or caregivers.

Emerging anecdotal evidence suggests that, while delivering educational programme remotely ensures some degree of continuity of learning for many students, absenteeism of students from online learning or disengagement from courses despite logging-in are not uncommon. This is more serious in communities with low technological preparedness and insufficient incomes to afford the cost of accessibility. Even in a European country heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with a better ICT readiness, the Ministry of Education has reported that the absenteeism rate from online learning is 5-8%
nationwide. Online absenteeism could also have an effect on student dropout rates when schools reopen after the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, the extent to which students, teachers, and parents or caregivers are engaged with distance learning through TV or radio programmes, which are one-way knowledge transmission systems, remains unknown. Due to the necessity for speed of transition to distance learning, the process should allow for some failures at the start, but it should be iteratively improved. Above all, the effectiveness of distance learning strategies in terms of the reach to all students and the quality of learning should be paramount to all countries. Relatedly, measures to monitor distance learning processes and assess learning outcomes should be a critical component of distance learning strategies.

Focus and Objectives

Building on past UNESCO webinars on COVID-19 education response, this fifth edition focuses on the effectiveness of distance learning strategies. While national distance learning strategies consider the complementarity of formal and non-formal education and the range of education and training levels for lifelong learning pathways, this webinar focuses on school education. The objectives are to:

1. Identify barriers regarding technological and content preparedness and strategies adopted to overcome these barriers.
2. Examine measures taken or planned to increase coverage and improve the effectiveness of distance learning programmes.
3. Share experiences to monitor the effectiveness of distance learning programmes.

Guiding Questions

- What is the reach of distance learning programmes for different age groups? Who is not being reached, or is disengaging from distance learning programmes? Why?
- What measures are being taken or planned to support teachers, learners, and parents or caregivers to engage continuously to ensure the quality of learning in varied delivery systems including online models, TV or radio programmes, or print-based home learning?
- What mechanisms are in place to monitor and assess the effectiveness of distance learning programmes in terms of coverage, engagement, and the quality of learning?

Audience

Ministry of Education officials responsible for national distance learning platforms and programs, curriculum development, teacher development and management as well as ICT in education leaders, teachers, and teacher educators.

Technical specifications

The webinar uses Microsoft Teams Live as a technical platform.
Agenda

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<th>Time</th>
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| 13:00-13:10 | Welcoming remarks and introduction of the themes  
|           | Mr Borhene Chakroun  
|           | Director, Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems Division, UNESCO   |
| 13:10-13:20 | What we learn from national distance learning strategies in response to COVID-19 school closures  
|           | Mr Fengchun Miao  
|           | Chief, Unit for ICT in Education, UNESCO                           |
|           | Testimony from a parent  
|           | Ms Seoyong Kim, a mother of a secondary school student, the Republic of Korea |
| 13:20-14:00 | Sharing of experiences  
|           | • Who are learning and what they are learning: Distance learning solutions of Armenia  
|           | Mrs Zhanna Andreasyan  
|           | Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Republic of Armenia |
|           | • Overcoming absenteeism or disengagement from TV based distance learning  
|           | Mr Ladislas Dowbor  
|           | Professor, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUCSP), Brazil |
|           | • Ensuring the quality of distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic  
|           | Ms Yael Ginsler  
|           | Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division, Ontario Ministry of Education, Canada |
|           | • Evidence-based assessment of distance learning  
|           | Mr Mike Sharples  
|           | Emeritus Professor, Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University, the United Kingdom |
| 14:00-14:20 | Questions and answers |
| 14:20-14:30 | Closing remarks  
|           | Mr Tao Zhan, Director, Institute for Information Technologies in Education, UNESCO |